

# THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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## I.

### ON THE ESCHATOLOGY OF OUR SYMBOLS.

ONE cannot well appreciate at its full value the Eschatology of the Confession and Catechisms of Westminster, unless he is familiar in some degree with the teaching of the Protestant creeds in general, and also with the prevalent theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in this department. It is clear that the Westminster divines inherited a definite scheme of doctrine on the topics embraced in this department, to some extent from the Church antecedent to the Reformation, but still more decisively from the professed faith of the various Churches which bore the Protestant name. The Augsburg Confession, for example, teaches (Art. xvii) that in the consummation of the world (*am jüngsten Tag*) Christ shall appear to judge, and shall raise up all the dead, and shall give unto the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys; but ungodly men and the devils shall He condemn unto endless torments (*sine fine crucientur*). It also enters a solemn protest against those who imagine that there shall be an end of such torments, and formally condemns those who scatter abroad Jewish notions (*Judaicas opiniones*) to the effect that before the resurrection of the dead, the godly or the saints shall, for a time, occupy the kingdom of this world—shall set up and enjoy an earthly kingdom—the wicked being everywhere suppressed or exterminated (*alle Gottlosen vertilgen werden*). With these comprehensive declarations it may safely be said that all of the subsequent creeds of the sixteenth century, British as well as Continental, so far as they contained eschatological matter, were in substantial agreement.

#### IV.

### THE PRESENT ASPECT OF OUR RELIGIOUS LIFE.

**T**HE religious life, like every other form of life, manifests itself in very different ways. As there is no unvarying type of personal religious experience, so that one can say, this is genuine, and all else is spurious or if genuine is one-sided or exaggerated, so there is no one manifestation of it which can be set up as a standard to which all must be conformed. Life in all cases refuses any such restriction. The seed or germ is the same; but the tree, while retaining its specific form, varies in shape and contour, in size and symmetry. The life is one, but it wears countless diversities in its outward form. The principles out of which the Christian life issues, the truths in which it roots itself, and from which it draws its nourishment and growth, are the same everywhere and at all times; but the life appears in a thousand different forms, varying perhaps in every particular case. This is due partly to the fact that those in whom grace works have different qualities and gifts, or the same gifts and qualities in very different degrees; and grace always works without destroying or marring these individual features of character. It works in and through these personal individual features, it modifies and harmonizes, but never destroys. This diversity is due partly also to the freeness and sovereignty which marks the work of the Holy Spirit, who works in all severally as He wills, giving His own impress and character to each one. Thus, under the teaching and training of our Saviour Himself, we have a Peter, a Thomas, and a John, all, in all essential respects, alike, and yet differing so widely each from the other in the outward manifestations of their faith and love, that they have been taken as types of large classes of believers. Thus the Apostle Paul, coming out from different surroundings, reared under a different system of instruction, having marked personal features of character, but brought under the power of the same truth; and the same faith in Christ, presents in some aspects a new and perhaps higher form of piety than either of the others. And there is no good reason to think that the peculiarities are exhausted, or that these only are the types into which all genuine religious life must run.

so that all diversities from these types must be regarded as exceptional or abnormal growths.

It ought not to surprise us, therefore, or strike us as singular, that every age should have, to a greater or less extent, its own form of piety. The life works through the centuries according to its own nature, but works under different conditions and in diverse forms. If there are different manifestations of its power in the same age, then we may expect that there will be the same variety in different ages. This variety, when it appears, may be traceable to the peculiar mental characteristics of the age; to the general atmosphere which the Church breathes; to the prevalent philosophy at the time; to the relations which the Church sustains to the world and world-powers; and to the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in the measure and method of His work.

The mental characteristics of the age give outward shape and coloring to the religious life. We cannot so separate our religious from our mental life, that we can measure exactly, and therefore safely, its health and vigor by itself. There is no such line of distinction running through our personal life and history, that we can thus isolate any one form of our life, and regard it by itself. We shall fall into error if we make the attempt. Our judgments will be misjudgments. We shall overlook relations and influences which are essential to correct views. Our religious life takes up into itself and influences all the parts of our complete being. It is not emotion, nor knowledge, nor duty merely, but it involves the highest exercise of our intelligence, emotions, will and conscience. It is the highest and most complete form of our life. It has its seat and throne in the conscience, but while it rules the man in whom it exists, and shapes his views and conduct, it always works under the conditions in which men are, works in and through their mental habitudes, and is therefore shaped by them at least as to its outward form and expression. Now as every age and people has its habits of thought, its mental features and characteristics, one practical and another speculative, one critical and another logical and constructive, one active and another contemplative, one aggressive and another conservative, so the peculiar features of the religious life will differ. If the piety of Paul differs from that of John, and differs somewhat according to their mental structure and habits, while the essential elements of all godly living are found in both; so the piety of the apostolic age in real vigor and in its outward form differs from that of the centuries which follow it. The Grecian culture and habits of thought then ruled and molded all the thinking of the civilized world. And although the Gospel came as a new and living power into all its culture and thought,

and imparted of the fullness of its own life to all the forms in which the human mind was then working, it received as well as gave, and those mental habitudes of the intellectual world which it then met, left their impress upon its own life and manifestation. The history of the Church is full and explicit in its testimony. While the Church owes a debt of gratitude to the men of that age, fitted by this very culture to grapple with the great problems of its faith as to the person of Christ, and the doctrine of the Trinity, and to give them clear and satisfactory statement for all the ages; we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that they lost somewhat of the freshness and vigor of their piety. It was a needless loss, but it was real and great. The speculative spirit and tendency drew them away from the simplicity which there is in Christ. The apostle saw the danger, and in all his later epistles warns against it. But the germs bore their fruit. The effort to bring the gospel into the forms of their philosophic culture, loosened its hold upon the conscience as of divine authority, led to serious departures from the faith, and lowered the tone of piety. The transition from the apostolic age to that which followed it, is like passing out from the clear and healthful sunshine into the dim, chill and uncertain twilight.

This diversity again is partly due to the general atmosphere which the Church breathes, the "zeitgeist." It has, indeed, always an atmosphere of its own, but while it is in the world it must breathe the atmosphere of the world, and it cannot breathe it without feeling the result in its own health and vigor. It cannot altogether escape the contagion. It has divine virtue to resist the insidious power. It throws off by the force of its own life and the preserving agency of the Holy Spirit the poisonous influence. But still the influence is felt. The world intrudes into the religious life. There is a less vigorous hold upon spiritual truths. Unseen objects, or objects seen only by faith, lose their power. Faith is sickly and feeble, and there is no healthy piety when faith is feeble. If it is a privilege to live by the faith of the Son of God, the faith is essential to the life. If the air is filled with doubt and Christian men must breathe the air, it will not be easy to retain a strong hold upon the objects of faith. The Christian life will be lowered in its idea, in its attainments, and in its joy. The spirit of the world enters the Church and becomes a transforming and molding spirit, or rather this will be the tendency and drift, the set of the current which the Christian must resist. Times of great material prosperity and of practical skepticism or unbelief are not far removed. The connection between them is close and not difficult to trace. Vast material interests claim the thoughts of men; the eager pursuit of gain which seems to lie within their reach; the splendid promise which

fills their vision and which bids fair at their touch to turn into reality; the intense rivalries which these promises and hopes call into being, give neither time nor inclination for serious thought. The relations to God and eternity lie in an unreal world. Its objects are vague, indefinite and powerless. At such times the Christian life works under unfriendly influences. It will be restricted in its power, and, as all life, working under restraints and yet with an irrepressible force, will manifest itself in abnormal methods. It runs into formalism, or into a one-sided evangelism, or into asceticism. Piety loses its symmetry, attractiveness and power.

Whatever may be our theory as to the relation between philosophy and religion, it is certain that the one influences the other. Any analysis of our mental nature, however crude or incomplete it may be, shows that it must be so. The experience of all the ages is full of illustration and proof. Philosophy is ever working its way down from the great thinkers with whom it may be a speculation or theory only, through the different ranks of society, until it reaches the masses, with whom it becomes a practical force, and molds their lives. The apparently barren controversy between the Nominalists and Realists was actually full of fruit, and left its impress not only upon the faith, but upon the lives of men. It was a mighty force entering into all human thought and feeling, determining men's opinions and conduct. The German philosophies, in their ever-changing forms, are not mere splendid speculations which attract and charm men, and leave them as they were. They have ensnared multitudes with their delusive beauty and promise, who are mourning over their lost faith, and in their "unchartered freedom" from the authority of conviction and conscience, are shaping their conduct according to the only light left them, the dictates of prudence and custom. The encyclopædists in their infidelity wrecked both society and faith, opened the sluice-ways to violence and ungodliness, and gathered their harvest in the atrocities of the French revolution. The idealism of Berkeley and Hume bore its legitimate fruits in the heartless and formal piety which held the churches in its cold embrace until the great awakening under the Wesleys and Whitfield. No one doubts that the Edwardean philosophy influenced and molded the piety of that day, gave it more or less its intense and one-sided subjectiveness, and turned the thoughts of believers to their experience, more than to Christ.

It would be in the face of all experience to expect that the present materialistic philosophy which asserts its claims with so much confidence should be without like results. We may draw the line between our theories and our practice, but the great masses will step across the line and carry their theories into the life. The

transition is easy and natural, and on the assumption that the theory is true the transition is right. It is what ought to be made. The "potency and power" of this theory is already apparent. If matter and force are all; if man takes his place in the endless chain of causes and effects; if he is simply a higher development of the brute; then it cannot be strange if men place a low estimate upon their own lives, or the lives of others. If life involves reproach and suffering why not put an end to it at once?—and since an end must come, and this life is all, there seems to be no logical escape from such results, and the system must bear its fruits. If we have not reaped them, yet the harvest is sure to come. What limits or restrains it for the present, is the indestructible conviction which clings to us and to which we instinctively cling, which asserts itself in the face of all theories, that the soul lives although the body dies, and that life, therefore, is a sacred thing with which we cannot innocently trifle. But whatever may be true as to this particular result, the general issues of this materialistic philosophy in the religious life are clear. It degrades our conception of the dignity of man; it unlooses the bands which hold in check the evil passions of man and leaves him to his brutish instincts and tendencies. This is its legitimate trend and drift.

The relation which the Church has sustained to the civil powers has modified its religious life, both to make it deeper and more genuine, and more superficial and worldly. Persecutions have served to winnow the Church; to lead true believers to a more secluded life, and to a more profound acquaintance with the truth; to make them conscious of their need of divine help; to bring them into a closer fellowship with Christ, and thus make them hearty, stalwart and humble. The favor of the world, on the other hand, tends to draw men out from themselves, to lure them away from Christ, to encourage them to a confidence in their own virtue and strength, and thus emasculates their piety. It lies on the surface; it endures hardness and self-denial with little fortitude. It shrinks from the cross, and is never fruitful in heroic virtues. We please ourselves with the fancy that this source of diversity in the character of our piety is dried up; that we have solved the problem of the relation of the State to the Church; that we have solved it by declaring their utter severance; that the State has nothing to do with religion, save to protect the man in his religious as in his other rights and interests, and that the Church has nothing to do with the State, except to bring religious truth and obligations to bear upon the conscience of its members. But the relations of society are complicated, and these two spheres seem to cut each other. Questions arise which involve the interests both of the Church and the

State, as the education question, the Sabbath question, the Mormon question—in regard to which it is not easy to say just what belongs to the State and what to the Church. But without entering upon any discussion here, it is enough to say that the relations the Church sustains to the civil powers will to a greater or less extent modify its piety now, as it has done in the past.

But much is due also to the free and sovereign agency of the Holy Spirit. If He works in individuals as He wills, so He works through the centuries with no less sovereignty. He stamps the piety of one age with one feature, and that of another age with a different feature. He works in and through the mental habitudes, the prevalent philosophies, the civil powers, and thus directly by His own power and through the truth, and indirectly in and through these surroundings, he gives character and tone to the piety of the age. It is unquestionably true that He can lift the Church above all unfriendly influences, or preserve its faith and godliness notwithstanding their power. He is unlimited, working as He wills. And it is not difficult to see that through all these diversities, one and the same Spirit has wrought, carrying forward His own purpose of grace, and making these very differences contribute in turn to the development of the truth and the clearer conception of that standard to which all genuine piety must conform, *i. e.*, the life of Christ. It is in the light of His teachings that the apostles received and stated the truth in all its fullness. His beams fall upon the early Christian centuries and the Greek culture, and the doctrines of the person of Christ and the sacred Trinity take their place in the firmament of truth and shine with steady splendor. His rays reach across the centuries, and the great truths which Augustine taught of the sinner's lost condition, his inability to all good, his entire dependence upon the sovereign and renewing grace of God come into the galaxy of the truths believed. The light shines into Luther's cell, and the doctrine of justification by faith was set in its true relations, and the hearts of believers were filled with peace and joy. The Wesleys felt its quickening beams and taught the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit and of personal assurance as the believer's heritage. The light shines around us still as the Church is coming nearer the truth, that Christ, to whom the Spirit witnesses, is the centre of its theology and of its life. All along the ages the Spirit, given to the Church at first and still dwelling in it, has wrought, touching the faith and life of believers, and shaping them to the end He seeks, which is to enthrone Christ in the faith and lives of men. Perhaps we are reaping in part the fruits of this gracious providence of the Spirit in the Lives of Christ which are now coming from the press in such variety, a life which the Church still feels has

not been fully grasped or written, and which it still waits for, as one striving after her ideal life and piety!

This brings us to ask, What are the peculiar religious features of the present age? Are we coming nearer to the ideal? It will not be questioned that our piety manifests itself in a remarkable activity in the field of Christian work in the world; in the grace of benevolence; in charity to those who differ from us; in an indisposition to dwell upon minor differences in creed or practice; in greater leniency towards faults not startling or flagrant, in faith or morals. Some of these are characteristics peculiar to the present day.

The field of Christian work is widened and more attractive. It enlists more truly the interest and the energies of the Church than at any period since the days of the apostles. And the field is much wider now than even in that age, as the world in its vastness is comprehended more fully, and the teeming population is so greatly increased. The field is the world. The mission upon which the Church is sent is to disciple all nations, and that mission is pressed upon the conscience of the Church as never before. No one can question that the deep and wide interest in the mission work, involving such self-denial as it does; the effort to reach and rescue the great masses of the degraded in Christian lands; are the fruit and the measure of Christian piety. They grow upon no other root. The principles which underlie all this activity, which stimulate the Church to it and sustain it under the burdens it brings are gracious principles. Nothing but the deep conviction that men are lost in sin, that the gospel of the grace of God is the only remedy for sin, that the gospel is ample in its provisions and free and unlimited in its offer; nothing but the love of Christ glowing in the heart, and love to our fellow-men as those for whom Christ died; will prompt the Church to this work or sustain its courage and purpose. Mere impulse or mere philanthropy may stir the heart and start men in such an enterprise, but they will never sustain them under the heat and burden and exhaustive toil which it demands. It is possible, indeed, that we scarcely know yet what the grand enterprise will demand, what sacrifices will be required to its ultimate success; but we know that these convictions and motives, if they are genuine, will bear any strain to which they may be subjected. Love will not shrink from the sacrifices. And the heavier the strain laid upon the Church, the more beautiful and consistent its piety becomes.

It is not true, indeed, that this activity belongs exclusively to the living Church or to the generation which has just preceded it. The Church has never lost sight of its mission. All the principles of the new nature require this activity. It has ever gone out, in the Spirit of Christ, to seek and save the lost. It has never forgotten



the command to preach the gospel to every creature. It has indeed failed in its obedience. Under the pressure of the questions which concerned its faith and life and claimed its attention, it found little time or energy for its mission work. And the surroundings were unfavorable. It was hampered and restricted in its operations by hostile forces. The outlying world was afar off, and access to it was difficult and perilous. The conditions are widely different now. The Church life sympathizes with the wondrous activity of the age in which we live. World-wide enterprises are topics of common thought and effort. Modern science has removed hindrances, has brought the nations together and given the Church facilities for its work which were not dreamed of a generation ago. The civilization we have reached favors the general elevation of the race. All the surroundings are favorable. The Church enlarges its vision, takes in the wide field of the world, turns its eye upon the vast work before it, and hopes and expects to win this world to Christ. Its love to Christ and to men, its living faith in the promises of God, its obedience to the divine command, are illustrated in this mission work, and are characteristics of its piety.

This work calls into exercise and cultivates benevolence. It demands means. It lays its claim upon the property or possessions of the Christian world. It calls for a practical recognition of the truth that we are stewards; that what we call ours is God's, which He has given us to use, and which we must use as He directs, and in the interests of His kingdom. The Christian world has caught glimpses of this truth, and makes some response to it. It has not yet risen to any full conception of what the principle calls for. Its responses are meagre and fitful. Still it is much that this conviction is imbedded in the Christian faith, and in some measure enforced by the Christian conscience. There is large promise in the fact. There is scarcely any respect in which it is more difficult to bring our practice into full correspondence with truth and duty. And the Christian who has learned to grasp the thought and make it practical, that what is his own in relation to his fellow-men, is not his own in relation to God, is simply a trust from God, has made a great attainment in grace. If the Church is coming up to that plane of thought and action, as we may hope it is, it is coming into closer fellowship with Christ who gave Himself for us.

There is at present an obvious indisposition to dwell upon minor differences in creed or practice, an easy comprehensiveness which includes nearly all shades of belief. Charity is so lovely a grace, and occupies so conspicuous a place in the circle of Christian graces, that every one feels that it is essential to a healthy piety. The life without it, whatever else it may have, lacks the "bond of

perfectness." We may well drop our minor differences, or at least place them in the background and give scope to this divine grace. It grows out of the consciousness of the love of Christ, out of the fact that all believers are born of the same Spirit and are brethren of the one family of Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that Christians should love each other. This grace is not only beautiful but essential. To be without it, is to deny our Christian nature. This love and unity is enforced not only by the demands of our nature, but by the fact that the forces of evil in the world, while formally countless, are practically one. One certainly in spirit, sympathy and aim. The Church must be one in the bonds of Christian love if it is to be successful in its warfare with evil. We cannot hold the Christian truth with a divisive spirit, nor accomplish our Christian work with divided forces and energies.

But we need to be on our guard, lest under the impulse of love we should place vital truths as mere minor points. Charity is not indifference to the truth, but holds the truth in love, respecting the persons and character of those who differ from us. We may not say, to quote the illustration of Coleridge, "that a Unitarian cannot be a Christian," but we may say "that Unitarianism is not Christianity." The charity which is born of indifference to the truth, which would lead us to fellowship or allow fundamental error, which is inconsistent with flaming zeal for the truth, is not the charity which Christ manifested or required. But the spurious and boastful liberalism which cloaks itself under the garb of charity, does not make the real grace less attractive or desirable. Whatever hinders it is to be deplored, and any increase in its fervor or scope is a matter for thankfulness and joy. Every Christian heart beats in unison with the prayer of our Lord, "that they all may be one"—"I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me." The oneness for which the Saviour prays is that which the world can see. And it cannot well be questioned that there is a growing exercise of this grace, that in the onward working of the Holy Spirit in the Church there is a kindling of this grace, which both illuminates and melts, which opens the eyes of believers to see how narrow are the lines which separate them, and melts off the asperities which have grown so harsh while they have been apart. We may well rejoice in this grace. It is a blessed and a hopeful thing if the Church is growing consciously into the likeness of God, who is love.

But this is only side of the truth. While we may congratulate ourselves upon the splendid activity and achievements of the Church

in its evangelistic work, upon its growing benevolence and consecration as measured by its gifts, upon the charity or love which reproves all divisive measures and tends to heal all differences, there are features in our religious condition which are not so full of promise. There are serious deficiencies, which, unless supplied, will surely make our piety fruitless, and even now cripple the Church in its life and work.

We fail to reach so thorough a knowledge of the human heart as corrupted by sin and full of evil, or as "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," as those of other days. The experience even of the believer is not marked by that deep conviction of sin, its extent, its malignity and its fearful power, as enthroned in the heart and conscience, nor by that contrition which finds its only fitting expression in the Scripture phrase, "a broken heart and a contrite (crushed) spirit." These are not the characteristic features of present experience. The tendency is not to look within at the working of sin in our hearts, not to bring the heart into the light of the manifesting presence of God, infinitely holy, and whose holiness is the measure of sin; but to look out to the life and the work. There may have been somewhat that was morbid or unwise in the introspection and the consequent experience which marked the piety of the Puritan and New England believers, but it made humble and sturdy and fruitful Christians, no less loving and gentle than stern. They were at work among the roots of things, down beneath the surface, and the beauty and fruitage of their lives revealed how wisely and thoroughly they had wrought.

This profound sense of sin not only gives character to our experience, but underlies our views of the whole scheme of divine grace. It is fundamental to the study of the facts of history. We cannot say why sin was permitted to enter the world. This is the insoluble problem which presents itself everywhere. But sin being here, and of the nature it is, many of the darker problems of our faith are no longer inexplicable. Pain, suffering, death, here and hereafter, come in the train of sin. It is because sin is so malignant and holds men under its sway that we need just such a redemption as we have in Christ. The gospel is not only a revelation of the love of God, but the revelation of the method by which the love of God reaches to us sinners. If we are lost in sin, then of course salvation must come to us in the free grace of God. Then grace is sovereign and pure. If we are under condemnation, then if we are redeemed we must be taken from under condemnation, and, as the law condemns, redemption must be by satisfaction to the law. Then men can never dream of merit, much less that God is under obligation to give them the offer of His grace. The only door of

hope opens at the footstool of divine mercy, and sinners must come there for hope and life. And men need now, in these days, when the power which man wields over nature seems almost without limit, when the nations are making such rapid progress in all that pertains to external civilization, and the whole drift of things in scientific and philosophic investigation is to inspire men with high notions of their own powers and of their own goodness—men need now to be led down into their own hearts, to the world within them which they have not subdued, to the discovery of the pollution and vileness of sin; that while conscious of power and victory in the world of material things, they may become conscious, also, of entire helplessness to release themselves from the grasp of the mighty.

This deficiency in the knowledge and sense of sin has its fruit in a low estimate of the grace of Christ, who redeems us. The one of these will practically measure the other. As the true nature of sin is seen only in the light of the holiness of God; as it is only then, that, like Job, one smites upon his breast, ceases to make any defense and utters his confession, "Behold, I am vile;" so the more we see of our guilt and helplessness, the more we shall admire the grace of Christ which rescues us. If sin has loaded us with an intolerable burden of guilt and we have found the bitterness and anguish of a conscience disturbed, apprehensive and judicial, we shall welcome the grace of Christ, whose blood speaks peace to the conscience. The experience of the apostle is typical here. It is as "the chief of sinners" that he lays hold of Christ as his Saviour. It is as "less than the least of all saints" that he magnifies the grace of Christ in his apostolic calling. It is out of his own experience of sin that he labors to express the greatness of the divine mercy—"the grace," "the glorious grace," "the riches of the glory of His grace." It is out of the depths of his conflicts with sin, the law in his members, that he cries out, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and then breaks out into thanksgiving for the deliverance, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord." There is nothing weak or sentimental or one-sided in the apostle's experience. It is a healthy and normal experience, under the truths of sin and grace. If the conviction of sin and the apprehension of divine grace are important factors in the Christian life, we can readily see how truly any want or deficiency here will color our whole lives. If sin is but a slight evil and of little power, then a small measure of grace may overcome it; but if sin is indeed that evil and bitter thing which the Scriptures teach, then there is no grace which can rescue us from it but the grace which led the Son of God into our world and to the atoning death of the cross.

The Christian character is always presented to us in the Scriptures

as having its source and nourishment in Christian truth, especially in the truths of sin and redemption. The apostle follows his exposition of these great truths, his own heart glowing with their light and heat: "I beseech you, therefore"—and what a mighty force and impulse lies hid in that word "therefore"—"by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Reminding the Ephesian believers of their death in sin, and of their redemption from it through the grace of Christ, and of His wondrous love shown in that redemption, he breaks out: "I therefore," gathering up and condensing into that one word "therefore" all that lies between death in sin and life in Christ, to give it a force and momentum—"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." So in all his epistles he builds his exhortation to practical godliness upon these central truths. In Paul's view the Christian life is not an impulse, but the steady onward growth of great living truths. His personal faith in these truths, as he, above all other men, saw them in their full-orbed splendor, filled his heart with overflowing gratitude and made his whole life a consecrated life, for he says: "We thus judge that if one died for all, then all died, and that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." His flaming zeal, his self-denial, his untiring work for Christ, his readiness to lay himself and all his powers upon the altar of service, his unflinching courage in the face of danger, his manly fortitude in trials, whether they came through the direct providence of God or through the hatred and violence of those who opposed themselves to the gospel of Christ; all the great features of his piety, its manly beauty and strength, its devoutness, thankfulness and joy, are due to his faith in these truths. It must be so in every case. Their fruit is unto all godliness. The Christian virtues are plucked from no other tree. There is nothing we more need for the genuineness and symmetry of our character than to go back to these fountains of all right feeling, right purposes and right living.

There is reason to fear that the disposition to overlook distinctions, in our zeal for charity, has had a tendency to lower our estimate of the value of truth, and to relax our hold upon it. It is not a pure good that controversies are a matter of reproach; and that any vigilance in guarding the truth against perversion is stamped with the odium of "heresy hunting," and the man who ventures into the conflict does it at the peril of his Christian standing. If a man can call in question the absolute sovereignty of God over all His creatures, can deny that sinners living in sin are dead and

righteously condemned, that the special and electing love of God is necessary to their salvation, and retain his status in the Church, it indicates not only that the Church is broadening in its scope and comprehension, but that it is losing its hold upon distinctive and vital truths, and losing its power unto holiness and well-doing. Controversy which grows out of a love for the truth, is every way healthy and praiseworthy. No one can read the instructions of the apostle in his pastoral letters without feeling that the Church is set for the defense of the truth, and that those who defend the truth, if they do it in love, are worthy of all commendation. Facts will not allow us to believe that our age is any more friendly to the truth than those which have gone before it. We have not outlived the need for controversy. We are not living above the cloud-regions. The mists and storm-clouds hang around us. It is, indeed, in accordance with the experience of the ages, and with that law of development which rules in the sphere of evil as well as in the realm of good, to expect that the assaults upon the truth will be more subtle and persistent now, and if not resisted, more destructive than even in the past. It is safe to say that the most strenuous controversies are just upon us. It is not the outworks, but the very citadel of the faith, which is the object of assault. It is not now the providence of God, nor His relation to His moral creatures, around which the strife centres; but whether there is a God; and whether on the supposition that there is, He has spoken to men and made known His will; and whether if He has spoken, we have His word and can know what His will is. These are foundation truths; and if they are in peril, controversies must exist until they are placed beyond question. The love of the truth, the flaming zeal in its defense, if Elijah-like, is not inconsistent with the largest and the sweetest charity. Charity, indeed, grows upon strong convictions and clear views. He who stands up resolutely for his own faith will readily concede to others what he claims for himself. There is nothing so liberal as the truth, and he who holds it most tenaciously must breathe its spirit. It is the truth which makes free. The harshness, the ill-will, the illiberality and personalities which have so often marred controversies in the past, have characterized those who assail the truth more than those who defend it. Martyrdom is the crown of the truth, not of error. While there have been rare cases in which truth has been defended with a haughty air, and with the arm of violence; the prison and the stake, the sword and fire, witness all along the ages that it is the truth which has suffered violence, and that it is upon the adherents of the truth that the lustrous crown of martyrdom has been set.

The tendency to lower our estimate of the value of the truth

under the plea of charity, broad-mindedness, liberty, falls in with the spirit of the age. This sides largely with the looser views. It chafes at restraints. It charges narrow-mindedness and prejudice upon those who oppose it. It boasts of its liberalism. It has burst the shackles in which opinion and faith have been bound. It has little respect for creeds. It has outgrown the necessity for them. They are musty and smell of the ages. They are an anaconda which gripes them in its folds. They choke and suffocate the free spirit. It is an age, it is said, busy with the great problems of society, with the practical work of lifting men to a higher plane of living, of rescuing them from degradation and sin. It cannot waste its time in controversies, even though they touch the vitals. As if the great problems of society did not find their full solution in the gospel; as if there was some other way of saving men than by the truth as it is in Jesus; as if time could have better use than to bring the truth in its completeness and power to the consciences of men; as if we could have the cool and living streams without the fountain. We can never separate well-doing from right faith. It still remains true that as a man believes so is he. It can be shown that all these movements looking to the relief of human woes, and the elevation of men, so far as they have any rational basis or permanency, owe their vigor to Christian truth, have sprung out of hearts nurtured in the faith and creeds of the Church; and there is need that the Church should guard its own—that while opening its heart gladly and fully to all the pleas coming from the ills of society and responding to them, it should not fail to recognize that its power to bless men lies in the truth, taught as it is revealed in the Word and applied by the energy of the Holy Ghost.

This tendency to leave out of view the more distinctive doctrines of our faith, or at least to suffer them to be hidden; to broaden our faith at the expense of positive and definite statements; makes the piety of the Church deficient in its character as a witness for the truth. This is one of the great functions of the Church—a large element in its work. She is to witness in her creeds, in her teachings, and in the lives of her members. Our Lord said to His apostles: "Ye also shall bear witness, for ye have been with me from the beginning," and to his entire Church: "Ye are witnesses of these things;" "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." The Church owes it to Christ and the world that her witness should be clear and distinct. Any doubt lingering about her testimony would tend to hide the Saviour from men and imperil their highest interests. Her creeds are a testimony to the world as to the truth which she believes to be taught in the Word of God. If the truth is of any moment, if it has any practical influence in the salvation

of men, it must be clearly stated, and stated in its completeness. For the truth is one. It is seen only in its completeness when it is seen in its relations. It borrows a lustre from the stones with which it is set. A failure to state the truth explicitly and in its right relations, both to other truths and to the practical lives of men, renders the testimony insufficient and powerless; so that the spiritual life of men hinges upon this testimony.

The truth not only touches the life of men, but is unto godliness. It yields its fruit unto holiness and eternal life, and this fruit is plucked from no other tree. The truth is indispensable. It is only as taught of God, as holding the testimony of those who were qualified and entrusted by God, as sanctified by the truth, that the lives of Christians become Christlike, and constitute a living testimony for Christ.

The interest of the kingdom of Christ and its spread in the world depend upon this full and explicit testimony. The evangelical work of the Church, both in the home and foreign field, which is claimed as the very glory of our piety, is not a mere preaching work, or the teaching of the nations, or the planting of Christian churches with their ordinances and institutions. The life of the missionary, his personal life, his family life, the system of doctrine which he teaches, its suitableness to the condition and needs of men everywhere, combined into one—the doctrine seen in the life, the life flowing out of the doctrine—is a testimony. This witness when consistent is convincing. The world recognizes it. Men may resist statements made in words, the most logical arguments may be powerless; but they cannot shut their eyes to the life, beautiful and impressive with its purity and love. The skeptic who had found a residence in the home of Archbishop Fenelon and saw his everyday life, writes to his absent friend: "I must flee from this home or I must become a Christian." He felt the power of that testimony. The truth held by the Archbishop and the truth lived, left no room for doubt. It is not wonderful, perhaps, that a large circle in the Christian Church, from the prominence which witnessing to Christ holds in the Scriptures and has held in the history of the Church, should have contended that this is the first and the main thing which the Church has to do in this age. But while such a conclusion does not seem to be justified either by the commission which Christ gave His Church, or by the facts of its history, it is surely a sad and mournful thing, if it be true, that in a day like our own, when doubt is in the air and men are breathing it everywhere, the voice of the witness-bearing Church, testifying to the truth she holds from Christ, should not be heard above all the din of the conflict, that the light she bears should not penetrate through all the



mists and clouds which gather about the truth, and cheer the hearts of men. It would be a more deplorable thing should the Church lower its testimony to meet the demands of the age, or to make it acceptable to men. It is not by such a testimony that it will ever win men to Christ, or make them strong in the faith.

This review of the aspects of our piety, favorable and unfavorable, suggests grave questions as to the future. While there is nothing to alarm, it is clear that the Church has not yet reached its ideal. With all its progress, there are wide wastes lying at its very doors unreclaimed, and wider wastes in the heathen world. There is enough in the present prospect to stimulate to effort, nothing to encourage satisfaction or rest.

It is obvious that we cannot look back to any previous age of the Church as that to which we would return. There are, doubtless, features in its past history which we have partly lost and which might be engrafted again into our present piety with great profit; but we cannot go back. We cannot even if we would, and it would be folly to make the attempt. God does not lead His Church in that way. It is always looking with hope to the future. The future is the sphere of its more perfect life, but the future is never the reiteration of the past. God's providence in the Church, like His providence in general history, is ever towards the consummation of His own plan. It may seem to us that the progress is slow, sometimes even apparently a backward progress, but the path is onward and upward and leads into the light which irradiates all the darkness. All hope, therefore, lies in the future.

It is equally clear that nothing will be gained by concessions. If, in any respect, we are on the "downward grade," we shall not arrest the progress by taking off the breaks. We shall not win the world to a life of faith and self-denial by dropping from our idea of the Christian life all that is peculiar, all that separates it from the moral life of man, and conforming to the world in its maxims, customs and amusements. We shall never persuade men to turn from sin to Christ by dropping from our faith the sovereignty and eternal decree of God. It is a fearful loss to unseat God from His throne. The human heart will not be satisfied even if the sovereignty of God is yielded. It cannot endure an empty throne. If God is not seated there and men do not bow to His will as supreme, and adore and serve Him as their Lord, they will put themselves in the throne and worship and serve themselves. If we concede the one it will not be long before men will imperiously demand the other; and we shall find it difficult to refuse the demand. Nothing is ever settled by concessions when the truth is at stake.

Besides this, the system of truth revealed in the Scriptures is so

one, that to concede one point, brings all others into peril. To concede the absolute sovereignty of God imperils the whole doctrine of Providence, and changes materially the aspect of the doctrines of grace. The man who denies the strict deity of Christ will soon abandon the idea of vicarious atonement, and with this the view of men as lost, and then the necessity for any renewing power of the Holy Spirit. It is another gospel—while it is not another—and the sinner saves himself. It is by a logical necessity, as well as the clear teaching of history, that the drift away from the truth, starting at some one point in the system, grows wider and deeper until it opens out upon the sea of unbelief. Nothing therefore is gained by concession.

But we can magnify the truth, the truth in its simplicity and completeness, and in its relation to the faith and lives of men. It is not meant by this that the Church must go back to those forms of sound words which have proved a fit vehicle for the truth in the past, words which cannot well be changed or modified without modifying the truths they express. The Church is not bound to these, but it is bound to receive, hold and magnify the whole truth. It has no option as to what it will receive or reject. It may not eliminate any doctrine, and teach what remains as the gospel. It must teach the Word, the truths at which men cavil and are sometimes stumbled, as well as those which seem more congenial to the human heart. It must set forth in their true relations, human freedom and divine sovereignty, twin truths and of equal moment, each shining with the other's glory, and in their blended rays forming the pure white light; the love of God and the justice of God, grace and righteousness, the grace illustrating and revealing the truth that God is a just God and a Saviour; the law and the gospel, and the law as laying the foundation of the gospel; sin and redemption, and sin not as a calamity but as a crime, exposing the sinner to the penalty of the law, or death; the sinner's inability and his obligation to believe; the rewards and glory of heaven, and the darkness and hopelessness and misery of the lost in hell. Any failure to teach the whole truth, the truth in its completeness as it lies in the Word, will so far keep the Church from its ideal form and perfection. For Christ is the truth. It is by the incarnate and the written Word the Church attains its end.

The truth can never be held by itself. It will lose its vitality if it is restricted within narrow limits. It must flow out into the practical life of men. The Church must vindicate for it its rightful place in all the problems of society. It has the only adequate solution of these problems. It has the remedy for all human ills, since the gospel comes to rescue men from sin and from all its con-

sequences. If the strifes which agitate society and imperil all its interests; if the oppression, poverty, wretchedness, under which society groans and is restless, are the fruits of sin, the growths of the selfish greed and pride of men, there is no solution of the problem which does not go deep enough to reach the sources of evil, and sweeten and purify the fountains as they open in the human heart. Every other scheme is only a remedy, not a cure. The Church can solve these problems because it has the truth and the spirit of God. It can put the saving salt into the fountain. It needs but the application of the great principle of the Christian brotherhood of believers, the new life of love breathed into the soul by the Holy Spirit, the carrying out of that life under the law of love, which requires that we "should love our neighbor as we love ourselves," and that "all whatsoever we would that men should do to us, even so we should do to them." And just so far the problems are solved. All needed reforms are instituted and are in successful progress. This is no visionary or utopian scheme. If we do not now see the issue in the relief, or the removal of the ills which oppress society, it is because the Church has not applied its principles or used the powers which Christ has given it. It is not visionary within the limits of those who have been quickened into the life which is in Christ, and who actually live with Christ and in Christ. Within these limits self is dethroned and love reigns; and where love reigns it is no longer difficult to apply the law of love, and do to others as we would that they should do to us. The lust of pride, the greed for gain, the power of appetite, yield to this divine law. There is no evil, however strongly it may be entrenched, or however wide may be its sway, which it will not overcome; there is no sink of vice into which it will not enter that it may rescue and save its victims; there is no system of false faith which it will not undermine and destroy. The issue does not depend upon the power of the Church, but upon its faithfulness.

But how shall the Church apply its principles? How shall it bring its power to bear upon these problems? There are two methods in which it may do this. It may deal with these evils in their gigantic and organized form, as they now present themselves in society and threaten its very existence. The failure of the Church to apply its principles has occasioned, and to some extent justified, the organization of societies outside of the Church that are intended to combat these evils—societies as numerous almost as the evils with which they contend. The failure of the Church to reach the outlying multitudes with the gospel and to bring them under its saving culture and grace, has given rise to the new order of irresponsible lay-evangelists which has assumed such prominence

in recent years. It seeks to do what the Church has not done—to reach with the truth those whom the Church has not reached. It is possible for the Church to pour its own life and energy through these agencies. It may not only recognize them as efficient aids in its work, but touch them with its living power, and lift them to its own plane. The Church must meet the great growths of evil in its organized forms, as it presents itself not in the individual life but in the congregated life of numbers bound together by selfish interests or passions, with its saving truth and power. Its truth is fitted to cope with social problems, as with individual men.

But, whatever good may be reached in this way, it has a better method. It is the bearer of life and salvation to men, as men. It comes in the name of Christ, and by His authority offers to men its loving help. It deals with individuals to whom it finds access and who are directly responsible to Christ. It seeks to take men from the mass of evil, and transfer them with all their powers and influence to the number of the good. The man saved becomes the active agent in saving others. He takes his place at once among those who are striving to carry out the law of Christ's kingdom in the world, and sets his face against all organized forms of evil. This is the method upon which the Church in all ages has proceeded, by which its conquests have been won, and by which all permanent reforms have been effected. It applies its principles to the hearts of men, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the Church, wins them to Christ, brings them under the sway of His kingdom, and they are separated at once from all the forms of evil: if he is an employer, he will do justice to his employé; if he is a laborer, he will be content with just and equal wages; if he is a slave, he is the Lord's freeman; if he is free, he is the Lord's slave. The new life from Christ lays its restraints upon all his passions and appetites, and impels him to all good. It dries up the fountain and the streams cease to flow, or rather it drops its healing virtue into the fountain and the waters become sweet and pure, and the streams bring beauty and fruitfulness and joy. This is the divinely taught and the divinely attested method.

In the awful and abounding wickedness which reigned in the Roman civilized world, the apostles went everywhere bearing the word of life, the truths of the cross as the sovereign and effective cure for all human ills. They were called to meet essentially the same social problem which perplexes us. The human heart was depraved then as it is now, and the genesis of evil was as rapid and as vigorous and as portentous; but they formed no specific organization. They reached the heart and conscience of men, and the evils under which society groaned so far fell away, as the withered leaves and decaying branches fall from the tree.

In applying these truths to the consciences of men the Church must rely largely upon the regularly instituted agencies and means of grace. Unquestionably the commission to preach the gospel to every creature binds every Christian, and every Christian, therefore, in the wide sense of that word, is to preach. The man who has received Christ will tell of Christ. He will go everywhere preaching the gospel. He has authority from Christ to do it, and his life will be vocal with His message. But still the preaching by the living ministry, the public, official, authoritative preaching of the Word, is the grand agency which God uses in saving men. Irresponsible preaching, however earnest and evangelistic, can never be substituted for the regular ministry without dishonoring the ordinance of God. If there is a call for lay evangelists, then the Church should respond to the call and send them to their work with the sanction of its authority, and therefore responsible to it for their methods and doctrine. The evil of an unauthorized evangelism, while not impeaching at all the purity of the motives of those who engage in it, and without questioning at all the success which attends their labors, is so varied and serious that it demands consideration.

It is not a full ministry of the Word. It cannot be in the nature of the case. It lasts for a brief period only. It seeks a definite end, to bring men to an immediate choice of Christ. All its methods are chosen with reference to that end. It selects and enforces the truths which are adapted to secure that end. It is right in so doing, and the end is worthy. But it almost necessarily leaves out of view whole sections of the Word, truths which are adapted both to the preparatory work implied in these evangelistic labors and to the subsequent work in building up believers in faith and holiness. It is a defective and incomplete ministry. The Wesleyan itineracy, that marvelous instrument in certain lines of work, gives no sufficient scope for the full systematic instruction in the truth. It is not merely the magnificent progress which that Church has made in its educational work, or the higher culture it has attained, nor the changed conditions surrounding it, but the consciousness that the two years were insufficient for the full and most effective work of the ministry which has led that Church to provide for a longer residence of three or five years.

Then it leads to a depreciation of the ministry in its ordinary work. It reaps the fruits which have been gradually ripening. The law of the kingdom applies here: One sows and another reaps. Every true minister would rejoice in this. He rejoices in the harvest, no matter by whom it was gathered. But it is important, not to the individual minister who sees with joy unspeakable the fruits

of his toil and prayers and tears, but to the ministry as the instrumentality appointed by God for the salvation of men, not that it should have the respect of the Christian people—that it has—but that its character should not be impeached, as if growing fruitless, or as if losing its power; that the large ingatherings, counted by numbers, should be traced to their source, should be seen to flow from the blessing of God upon the long-continued and faithful work of the stated ministry.

This of itself, however, might be easily remedied; but the tying of success to special services and to particular persons, in the thought of Christian people, grows into a practical distrust in the ordinary means of grace. Earnest prayer is offered before the evangelist comes. The Christian people unite in preparatory work. They seek the divine blessing upon the approaching services. But they do not pray with equal fervency, or with the same union of Christian hearts, for a like blessing upon the regular services of the sanctuary. They are not looking for such a blessing. They are not disappointed if it fails to come. They would be surprised if it came. And this attitude with respect to the means of grace is hurtful and dangerous. It may be said with truth that the Church "has not, because it asks not." The apparent fruitlessness of the ordinary means of grace is due to the fact that so little is expected from them.

It tends to unsettle the minds of the people, both as to the doctrines of the Church and the method of its work. Much, of course, depends here upon the character and wisdom of the evangelist. But the disturbing tendency lies in the very nature of evangelism, and no personal worth or goodness can wholly prevent it. The insisting upon certain truths and certain measures as essential to bring men to a decision for Christ, is so different from the method by which the Church has lived and grown—the early training, the wide and careful instruction, the faithful use of the stated means of grace, the steadfast waiting upon God for the dews and showers of His blessing—that it is not wonderful that men should be disturbed and restless. "Has the Church erred? Has it not insisted too much upon the truth and its teaching work? Must we be content with this slow and painful progress? Is there no shorter way in which lost men may be won to Christ? And is not this new evangelism the way? See its splendid results. In the rapid and hurried life of to-day we cannot wait for the slower progress. If men or measures stand in the way of this onward rush let them give place." And yet nothing is more certain than that the silent influences of the Word, which ever accomplishes that upon which it is sent, steadily preached; the ordinary Sabbath services; the Church in its

weekly prayer service, in its ordinances, in its Bible work with the young, in its loving nurture and training, in its personal work for Christ, is the mighty agency which is to bring the world back to God. And it is along this line that the Church must work. We greatly need a revival of faith, an expectant faith, in the efficacy of the ordinary means of grace.

With the truth magnified and rightly applied, and with a steadfast faith in the divine efficacy of the truth, and in the promises of God who attends it, and works in the storm as in the sunshine, through conflicts and strifes as in the serene and peaceful air, we may confidently expect that the Church will come to a higher plane of living than it has yet reached, nearer to the ideal after which it aspires and strives.

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